

**Teaching the Holocaust in Israeli middle schools;  
what are the relationships between history teachers' backgrounds,  
their opinions and their classroom practice?**

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**Abstract:**

This research focused on the teaching of the Holocaust in Israeli middle schools. It explored, in particular, teachers' backgrounds and the opinions of history teachers in relation to teaching about the Holocaust and the ways in which they taught the subject. Seventeen teachers took part in the research: 14 Jewish-Israelis and three Arab-Israelis from five different schools spread across Israel. Four schools were Jewish-Israeli and one was Arab-Israeli. All schools were state schools funded by the local authorities.

The principles of a grounded theory approach were used to analyse the data, which consisted of interviews with teachers, observations in classrooms and school documentation. It emerged that the most important factors that influenced teachers in their approach to the subject were their personal connections with the Holocaust, their political affiliations, the extent of their knowledge of the subject and their knowledge of their students' motivation to learn about the Holocaust.

The research concluded that although the Israeli National Curriculum (1995) stated clearly that teaching the Holocaust is compulsory and indicated what teachers should focus on, teachers nevertheless displayed a range of approaches to the subject. The research recommended that teachers who teach about the Holocaust should reflect on how they teach the subject and should engage in understanding how their backgrounds shape their thinking about the Holocaust and subsequently the way they teach young people about this complex and important subject.